

Asbestos registers at the workplace /

Guidance material

August 2023



safe work australia

Disclaimer

Safe Work Australia is an Australian Government statutory agency established in 2009. Safe Work Australia includes Members from the Commonwealth, and each state and territory, Members representing the interests of workers and Members representing the interests of employers.

Safe Work Australia works with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to improve work health and safety and workers' compensation arrangements. Safe Work Australia is a national policy body, not a regulator of work health and safety. The Commonwealth, states and territories have responsibility for regulating and enforcing work health and safety laws in their jurisdiction.

Creative Commons

With the exception of the Safe Work Australia logo, this copyright work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit creativecommons.org/licenses In essence, you are free to copy, communicate and adapt the work, even commercially, as long as you attribute the work to Safe Work Australia and abide by the other licence terms.

Contact information

Safe Work Australia | info@swa.gov.au | www.swa.gov.au

Contents

Foreword	4
Where is asbestos commonly found and why is it dangerous?	5
What is an asbestos register and why do I need one?	5
What should be done before preparing the asbestos register?	6
Who could be a competent person?	6
Who should develop the asbestos register?	7
What information should be in the asbestos register?	7
How should the asbestos register be stored?	7
What should happen once the asbestos register is prepared?	8
Who needs access to the asbestos register?	8
Demolition and refurbishment	9
When must the asbestos register be reviewed and updated?	10
What should I do if I no longer have management or control of the workplace?	10
Where can I get more information and advice?	10
Appendix: Example of an asbestos register	11

Foreword

If you are the person with management or control of the workplace, you must ensure that an asbestos register is prepared and kept at the workplace.

Examples of a person with management or control of the workplace are:

- A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) that owns and manages a commercial building or structure, including associated plant that forms part of the building or structure (e.g. lifts, air conditioners and boilers). This can include an owner who may or may not occupy the workplace but can still exercise control, for example, over how the workplace is maintained or refurbished.
- A PCBU that occupies a commercial building and is allowed to undertake structural changes, such as under a lease. In this case, the extent to which the PCBU has management or control over the workplace will vary according to the terms of the lease.
- A PCBU that has been given responsibility for management or control of a workplace, such as a commercial property manager.



This guide will help you to:

understand what an asbestos register is and if your workplace needs one, and

develop and maintain a comprehensive asbestos register that identifies asbestos at your workplace to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres.



If you are not sure if you are a person with management and control of a workplace and need advice, contact your [work health and safety regulator](#).

Where is asbestos commonly found and why is it dangerous?

Asbestos is found in older buildings in materials such as fibrous cement sheeting, external cladding, roof insulation, vinyl tiles, flue pipes, drains, roofs, gutters, electrical insulation, switchboards, meters and gaskets. You risk disturbing the asbestos when working with these materials during service, maintenance, refurbishment and demolition work.

Disturbing asbestos risks exposing people at your workplace, neighbouring businesses and the community to **airborne asbestos fibres**. Breathing in these fibres can cause life threatening diseases, such as **asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma**, which may not occur until 20 to 30 years after exposure.



What is an asbestos register and why do I need one?

An asbestos register is a workplace safety management tool that records the **location, type, condition** and **date of identification** of all material at the workplace:

- **identified** as asbestos or asbestos containing material (ACM), including asbestos or ACM likely to be present from time to time
- **assumed** to contain asbestos, and/or
- **likely** to contain asbestos but the material is not accessible for sampling and testing (e.g. area is sealed or material cannot be sampled such as a fire door).



An asbestos register is required in the [model Work Health and Safety \(WHS\) Regulations](#) which have been implemented in all jurisdictions except Victoria. If your workplace is in Victoria, please contact [WorkSafe Victoria](#) for guidance on asbestos registers.



Developing an asbestos register is an important first step towards avoiding exposure to asbestos fibres.

If buildings, structures or plant at your workplace were **built or installed before 2004, or in Queensland built before 1990**, and you are the person with management or control of the workplace, you **must** ensure an asbestos register is **prepared** and **readily accessible** to workers, health and safety representatives and other PCBUs at your workplace.

Whenever you are planning service, maintenance, refurbishment or demolition work at your workplace that involves a risk of exposure to asbestos you, must provide your asbestos register to workers, health and safety representatives (if any) and other persons (e.g. PCBUs, contractors and tradespersons). This allows them to identify and locate the asbestos and ACM at the workplace before commencing planned work.

This ensures:

- asbestos fibres are not accidentally disturbed and released into the air while working
- when asbestos or ACM needs to be disturbed (e.g. drilling), the required control measures are implemented to prevent the release of asbestos fibres at the workplace, and
- the appropriate asbestos license holder is engaged to undertake the removal of a licensable quantity of asbestos and ACM prior to demolition or renovation work.

What should be done before preparing the asbestos register?



Before you can develop the asbestos register, you must have a competent person inspect (i.e. survey) your workplace to identify all asbestos and ACM.

It is important that the **competent person** consults with you and takes detailed notes and photographs during the survey, as this will help develop the **asbestos register**.

It is also important that all duty holders in the workplace (e.g. PCBU's) consult, cooperate and coordinate with each other, as well as their workers and health and safety representatives (if any) with respect to the planned activities of the competent person. This includes contributing to the decision-making process relating to the asbestos register.

If the survey determines there is no asbestos and ACM at a workplace **built before 2004, or in Queensland built before 1990**, you are still required to have an asbestos register prepared and **readily accessible** with a statement indicating this finding.

Who could be a competent person?

A competent person is someone who has acquired the knowledge and skills to identify asbestos and ACM from training, qualifications, or experience. This means they can:

- understand how asbestos was used in building and construction practices, in order to determine where asbestos and ACM is present, or likely to be present
- identify asbestos and ACM
- handle and take samples of asbestos fibres and send to an accredited laboratory for testing, and
- determine if the asbestos or ACM is friable or non-friable and evaluate its condition.



A competent person¹ may be:

- an occupational hygienist, a licensed asbestos assessor, or removal supervisor who has experience with conducting asbestos surveys
- an individual who has a statement of attainment in the unit competency for asbestos assessors, or
- a person working for an organisation accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) under AS/NZS ISO/IEC 17020:2013: Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection.

1. In the ACT, only a licensed asbestos assessor may be used to identify asbestos or ACM.

Who should develop the asbestos register?

While the person with management or control of the workplace must ensure that an asbestos register is prepared, a competent person should be used to assist development of the asbestos register.

What information should be in the asbestos register?

Your asbestos register needs to be comprehensive, up to date and easy to understand for any person who needs to know the location of asbestos and ACM at your workplace.

In addition to the asbestos register, the presence and location of the asbestos and ACM should be marked on site plans and be accessible to any person who needs to know the presence of asbestos.



Your asbestos register **must** record all asbestos and ACM identified, or assumed to be present at the workplace, and **must** include the following information:

- the date the asbestos or ACM was identified or assumed to be present, including asbestos or ACM likely to be present from time to time (e.g date of the survey or test results from a NATA accredited laboratory)
- the type of asbestos
- the condition of the asbestos or ACM, and
- a location or description of where the asbestos or ACM can be found at the workplace.

How should the asbestos register be stored?

Your asbestos register **must** be easily accessible at the workplace, **at all times**.

Online database

Storing the asbestos register online, linked via a website address or QR code is an option that allows multiple persons to access the asbestos register on-site or off-site and enter real-time information to update and maintain a single, electronic version. Regularly backup electronic versions of the asbestos register and ensure data security is in place to prevent loss or unauthorized access.

Local server network

Storing the asbestos register on the workplace's local server network would also allow multiple persons to access the register at one time. You may need to copy, print and share the information with external persons, such as contractors, who would not normally have access to your local network.

Paper copy

Managing a paper copy of the asbestos register may be suitable for small businesses with only one or two workplaces. However, paper copies can be damaged, misplaced or lost, and version control can be an issue.



An example of an asbestos register is provided at the **Appendix**.

Photographs

You should include labelled photographs of the identified or assumed asbestos and ACM. This will help you and other persons reading the register to visually identify and confirm the location of the asbestos and ACM.



What should happen once the asbestos register is prepared?

Asbestos Management Plan

Your asbestos register is an important part of the written Asbestos Management Plan for your workplace. You must have an Asbestos Management Plan prepared for your workplace if asbestos and ACM has been identified or is assumed to be present.

As a PCBU preparing an Asbestos Management Plan, you must consult with workers and their representatives. This includes providing them an opportunity to 'contribute to the decision making process relating to the Asbestos Management Plan'.

You can find more information about Asbestos Management Plans in the [model Code of Practice: How to manage and control asbestos in the workplace](#).



Who needs access to the asbestos register?

You **must** keep the asbestos register at your workplace in a location that is **readily accessible** for any person who needs to know the location of asbestos and ACM in a building, structure or plant, including:

- workers
- any health and safety representatives, and
- any PCBUs who have carried out or intend to carry out work at the workplace (e.g. owners, commercial tenants, licensed asbestos removalists, contractors, self-employed builders and tradespersons).

It is important that all persons accessing the asbestos register can understand the information included.

Signage and labels

Clear and visible signage and labels are important to effectively communicate the presence of asbestos and ACM in the workplace.

You **must** ensure labels are placed at the location where material has been identified or is assumed to be asbestos or ACM, whenever possible. Include information about the labels in the asbestos register that will help a person locate the asbestos and ACM at your workplace.

You can use signs to indicate the presence of asbestos and ACM if labels are not reasonably practicable. You may also use signs to provide instructions about how to access the asbestos register. For example, you could place signs in several locations such as the administration office, reception, electrical meter box, etc.



Demolition and refurbishment

Many structures and plants containing asbestos and ACM will eventually be demolished or refurbished.

Prior to any demolition or refurbishment work, the asbestos register must be reviewed to ensure the proposed area(s) for demolition or refurbishment has been surveyed and assessed for asbestos and ACM.

A typical asbestos register may list asbestos and ACM that is visible and accessible. Any inaccessible areas, equipment or materials that are not surveyed and included on the asbestos register, increases the risk of accidentally disturbing unidentified asbestos and ACM during demolition or refurbishment work.



Undertaking a demolition or refurbishment asbestos survey, including sampling and testing of materials, if required, will ensure all identified asbestos and ACM is included in the asbestos register.

Example: Demolition and refurbishment of a 1970s arcade building

You are the owner of an arcade and plan to demolish the original air conditioning plant of the arcade and refurbish one of the shops for a new tenant to move into. As the building owner, you ensure other tenants are informed and consulted about the planned demolition and refurbishment work.

The building contractor requests a copy of the asbestos register for the arcade. To ensure your asbestos register is up to date and easy to understand, you arrange a review of the register. You also ensure the asbestos and ACM is inspected and assessed by a competent person.

You request the competent person to undertake a demolition and refurbishment asbestos survey. The survey includes the shop, air conditioning plant and any areas usually not accessible but are likely to be disturbed by the demolition and refurbishment.

The competent person identifies asbestos in parts of the air conditioning plant and under two layers of floor coverings in the shop. They revise the asbestos register to include this information.

You provide a copy of the revised asbestos register to the building contractor and other tenants. You arrange for the safe removal of all asbestos and ACM that is likely to be disturbed by the work, before the demolition and refurbishment work commences.



When must the asbestos register be reviewed and updated?

You **must review and update** your asbestos register at least once **every 5 years or when:**

- the Asbestos Management Plan is reviewed for your workplace
- additional asbestos or ACM is identified at your workplace
- previously identified asbestos or ACM is removed, disturbed, sealed or enclosed at your workplace
- refurbishment or demolition work is planned
- the plan is no longer adequate for managing asbestos or ACM at the workplace, or
- a health and safety representative, PCBU or worker requests a review.

This should include a visual inspection of the asbestos and ACM by a competent person.

What should I do if I no longer have management or control of the workplace?

When planning to let go of your management or control of the workplace, for example when selling the building, you **must** ensure that you transfer the asbestos register to the new person who has management or control of the workplace. If you have the contact details of the new workplace owner/manager, update the register with their details when transferring management and control of the workplace.



Ageing and deteriorating asbestos containing materials

Be aware that as ACM ages and deteriorates from weathering or normal wear and tear, the asbestos fibres could become exposed and be released into the air when disturbed. You should schedule a **regular visual inspection** (e.g. annually) of the asbestos and ACM at your workplace and update the asbestos register as part of your workplace safety management procedures.



Where can I get more information and advice?

Your Commonwealth, state or territory WHS regulator can provide you further advice about asbestos registers and compliance with the WHS laws. You can find the contact details for your [local WHS regulator](#) on the Safe Work Australia [website](#).

More information about asbestos registers and how to manage asbestos in the workplace is in the [model Code of Practice: How to manage and control asbestos in the workplace](#).

Safe Work Australia

- www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/asbestos


Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

- www.asbestossafety.gov.au
- www.asbestossafety.gov.au/find-out-about-asbestos/asbestos-workplace



Scan the QR code
Find out more on the Safe Work Australia website:
www.swa.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/asbestos

Appendix Example of an asbestos register

ASBESTOS REGISTER							
Date of register: DD/MM/YYYY							
NOTE: A demolition or refurbishment survey should be carried out by a competent person before undertaking refurbishment or demolition work.							
Workplace address:	XYZ Manufacturing, Trading Estate West, Villatown NSW 9001	Name and contact details of competent person:	Jim Smith OHS Asbestos Assessors (02) 3293 4012 Licence No. LLA000349	Workplace owner / manager:	Michael Stewart, Building Manager XYZ Manufacturing Pty Ltd (02) 9276 7054		
Areas not assessed:	Describe the location of areas not assessed during the asbestos survey and provide an explanation as to why.						
Asbestos related documents:	Link or details about how to access other documents e.g. asbestos survey report, Asbestos Management Plan, asbestos clearance certificates, asbestos removal control plan, and Safe Work Method Statement. Contact Building Manager for Asbestos Management Plan for XYZ Manufacturing.						
Consultation:	Outline of consultation with workers and any representatives. Attach minutes of relevant meetings.						
Date	Sample No.	Type of material identified or assumed and amount	Friable or non-friable asbestos	Condition of asbestos	Specific location of identified or assumed asbestos	Photo No.	Notes
<i>Date of the survey.</i>	<i>Include the laboratory reference number if a sample was sent for testing.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product type (e.g. cement sheet, vinyl tiles). Mineral type (e.g. chrysotile, tremolite, white, brown). Amount of material present (e.g. surface area, length, number of gaskets). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition (e.g. stable, poor, unknown). State of deterioration (e.g. minor, severe, weathering, cracks, peeling paint, material lifting to reveal asbestos). Surface coating (e.g. paint, vinyl). Describe if any treatment was used to prevent breakdown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the location (inside or outside). If inside include room name or number and where in the room? (e.g. floor, east wall, boiler, etc). If outside (e.g. exterior wall, south facing, etc). Reference diagrams over building plans highlighting the location. State if material is labelled and colour coded to distinguish between friable and non-friable. 	<i>Include photos of the asbestos and ACM and cross reference by number.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State if the area is accessible. If area is not accessible, explain why it may contain asbestos. Probability of disturbing or damaging the asbestos (e.g. low, medium or high probability) from activities that would normally be carried out at the workplace. Management recommendations (e.g. restrict access, encapsulate, remove, maintain in good condition). Other details or instructions.
21/11/2022	S001	Fibre Cement Wall sheeting. Approx. 15m ²	Non-friable	Stable condition, no deterioration, painted surface.	Bathroom in main building, southeast, green wall.		Area accessible. Encapsulate to maintain in stable condition. Remove prior to any refurbishment or demolition works.

